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THE
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Friends:

DOCTRINES AND PRACTICES IN WHICH
THEY AGREE WITH THEIR FELLOW-
CHRISTIANS, AND OTHERS IN
WHICH THEY DIFFER.



BY

EDWARD BACKHOUSE.



LONDON: E. BOWYER KITTO.
SUNDERLAND: WILLIAM HENRY HILLS.

1870.

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THE
RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Religious Society of Friends was first gathered to be a separate body of Christian believers through the instrumentality of George Fox and his fellow labourers in the Gospel, from about the year A.D. 1650.

These early Friends were men and women who had been awakened by the Spirit of God, to seek after a clearer and more perfect knowledge of Him than they had yet attained.

For notwithstanding some of them had been zealous Teachers and Ministers, both of the Established Church and among the Dissenters, they felt they did not yet possess that peace and satisfaction which their souls longed for.* There were many of these seekers after God. By such the authoritative message of George Fox was received with joy and gladness, "That Christ was come to teach His people Himself:" that

John xiv, 16 to
18.

* George Fox's Journal; Isaac Pennington's Works; William Dewsbury's Works, &c.

4 *The Religious Society of Friends, &c.*

Luke xvii, 20, the Kingdom of God was within : " That God
 21. must be waited upon, not with multitude of
 Psalms lxii, 5. words, but in the silence of all flesh : and that
 Eccles. v, 1, 2. He gives His Holy Spirit to those who sincerely
 Isaiah xli, 1. ask Him,—to be their Comforter and their guide
 John xvi, 13, into all truth. Thus by repentance toward God
 14. and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, they experi-
 enced remission of their sins, and walked with
 Him in newness of life.

They had long felt that rites and ceremonies
 did not profit them ; and now that the Day Star
 had risen in their hearts, types and shadows fled
 away and gave place to the eternal substance.
 Jer. xxxi, 33, They were taught by Christ Himself ; they knew
 34. Him to be come to them "the second time, with-
 Heb. ix, 28. out sin unto salvation ;" * and His Spirit bore
 Rom. viii, 16. witness with their spirits, that they were sons
 of God.

When the Society of Friends arose, there
 were great "disputings" upon religious subjects
 throughout the Kingdom ; a large amount of
 formal profession of religion, and yet no little
 ignorance of divine things.†

* In other words, They knew His Spirit to be with them,
 according to His promise, "I will not leave you comfortless,
 (orphans) I will come to you."—John xiv, 18.

† In 1640 Parliament appointed a committee "for removing
 scandalous ministers." Baxter says, that, "in all the counties,
 where he was acquainted, six to one at least, if not many more,

Therefore George Fox and his friends, were constrained, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to arouse both priests and people from formality and superstitious observance of days, and times, and ceremonies; to call them off from dependence upon *man* and his teaching, and to direct them to Christ, their Saviour, Prophet, High Priest, and King, as their true Teacher. They maintained that Christ is the *only* Head of His own Church: that human learning, however valuable, is not essential to qualify for the preaching of the Gospel; that in these "last days," both sons and daughters do prophesy; while the great truth of the teaching of the Holy Spirit (a doctrine especially lost sight of at that time), Friends felt bound to proclaim as the distinguishing privilege of the Christian dispensation.

Ephesians i,
22, 23.

Acts ii, 17, 18.

John xiv, 16,
17, 26.

that were sequestered by the committee, were by the oaths of witnesses proved insufficient or scandalous, or especially guilty of drunkenness or swearing."

At the "restoration" when Charles II came to the Throne, "religion was made a mere laughing stock." "A spirit of extravagant joy" says Bishop Burnet, "spread over the nation, that brought with it the throwing off the very profession of virtue and piety: all ended in entertainments and drunkenness: which overrun the three Kingdoms to such a degree that it very much corrupted all their morals. Under the cover of drinking the King's health, there were great disorders and great riots everywhere."

They protested against War, Oaths, Church Establishments, a paid Ministry, Tithes, Church Rates and all other Ecclesiastical Demands and State Endowments for professedly religious objects; and denied that any special holiness attached to ecclesiastical buildings or consecrated places. They opposed with unflinching determination the many tyrannous and antiquated laws enacted or revived with the aim to enforce uniformity, to suppress dissent, and to maintain the dominant sect * in its exclusive power over the consciences of men. Yet though these laws were thus felt to be unjust in their operation, the Friends' opposition to them was based upon the far higher ground of their incongruity with the loving precepts of the Gospel, and their inconsistency with the true liberty of the Kingdom of God, into which all are called, and into which they had entered.

In "the holy war" which naturally ensued, thousands of faithful Friends, "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods," and suffered long and painful imprisonments: while hundreds meekly laid down their lives for the testimony of truth.†

* The Church of Rome, the Anglican Church, the Presbyterians, and the Independents, by turns exercised this supremacy.

† See "A Collection of the Sufferings of Friends, by Joseph Besse," Folio, 2 vols., A.D. 1753: where the names of twelve

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It is therefore with the view of giving information to our younger members and others, that the following brief summary of our doctrines is offered. We first enumerate some of the principal points on which Friends hold views in harmony with other spiritually minded Christians; and secondly, some of those points on which Friends differ from opinions and practices more or less prevalent.

I.

POINTS OF AGREEMENT.

FRIENDS agree with other Christians in believing,—

I. In God the Father:

In Jesus Christ, His Son, the Saviour of the World: "God manifest in the flesh:"

In the Holy Ghost, the Comforter:

One God over all, blessed for ever.

II. In the inspiration and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures contained in the Old and New Testaments, which "are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

III. In "the resurrection of the dead," and "eternal judgement." Acts xvii, 31, 32.
Heb. vi, 2.

IV. That all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Romans iii, 23

V. That a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness, are essential to salvation; that "Except a man be born again," except he experience "the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost," except he experience conversion to God, "he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Titus iii, 5.
John iii, 3.

VI. That "we are saved by grace through faith : and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God : not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians ii, 5, 8, 9.

VII. That "we are washed, sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Therefore "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." I Corinthians vi, 11.
Romans v, 1.

VIII. That "if we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." "He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." I John i, 7.
II Corinthians v, 21.

IX. That "there is none other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be Acts iv, 12.

saved," but the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth:
 Romans v, 11. through whom also "we have now received the
 atonement" (reconciliation); and He is the propi-
 I John ii, 2. tiation for the sins of the whole world.

I John v, 12. X. That "he that hath the Son, hath life: and
 he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life."

Galatians iii, 27, 28. XI. That all who are "baptized into Christ
 have put on Christ." "There is neither Jew nor
 Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is
 neither male nor female; for [such] are all *one*, in
 Christ Jesus."

Rom. viii, 14. XII. That "as many as are led by the Spirit
 of God, they are the sons of God."

Matt. xxiii, 8. Other points of agreement exist between
 Friends and spiritually minded Christians of
 all denominations; but the above will suffice to
 shew that converted persons everywhere, have
 unity in essentials one with another. "One is
 their Master even Christ," and all such "are
 brethren:" all differences of creed in other
 respects, notwithstanding.*

* We are of course aware that in the "Points of Difference" about to be enumerated, many individuals, and even some of the Churches, entertain views more or less in accordance with those of Friends.

II.

POINTS OF DIFFERENCE.

FRIENDS believe—

I. That the Levitical priesthood has been abolished under the Gospel, and that no priesthood of man's appointment has any authority from God, being "done away in Christ."

Heb. vii, 12,
14. *et seq.*

II Corinthians
iii, 14.

II. That the distinction between clergy and laity is unsound: because all regenerated persons, whether men or women, are priests of Christ's "holy priesthood," and are called "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" their great High Priest.

I Peter ii, 5.

III. That this distinction between clergy and laity, which was unknown in the church until the second century,* tends to lessen the usefulness and to dwarf the spiritual growth of those called laymen; while those who claim to be the clergy, are exalted into a hierarchy,—a privileged class,—who are thus tempted to become lords over God's heritage.

I Peter v, 3.

* "All the righteous have the sacerdotal dignity."—IRENÆUS.

"Are not we laymen, also priests?"—TERTULLIAN.

Corinthians
xiv, 26, 33.
Peter iv, 11.

IV. That it is the prerogative of Christ to call to the ministry or service of the Gospel, and to qualify for the work : and that those whom He thus calls and qualifies, receiving their gifts freely from Him, are bound to preach the Word without charge : while it is a departure from Gospel order, for any to preach, or pray, or sing, in the public assembly of God's people, in their own will or time, and without the fresh putting forth of the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah lvi, 1.
Isaiah lii, 28, 29.
Acts xxi, 9.
Corinthians
xi, 5.

V. That women as well as men are called of God to preach the Gospel ; and that the prohibition of women from publicly prophesying (that is, preaching), according as they are " moved by the Holy Ghost," is damaging to their religious growth, and to their extended usefulness in the church ; and is therefore a hindrance to the spreading of the Kingdom of Christ.

VI. That the " establishment " of any system of religion by law, as the religion of the State, is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, and is an incubus on vital religion : for a church so " established " is placed in a position which is highly disadvantageous to those who belong to its communion, by giving them a worldly status denied to their fellow Christians of other religious denominations ; while the pecuniary demands of

the "clergy," legally enforceable, and, where practicable, enforced from those who do not attend their ministry, and who conscientiously object to many of their doctrines, are felt to be unjust, and become a source of division and strife: for they infringe the golden rule: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Matt. vii, 12.

VII. That, as Worship under the Gospel Dispensation is spiritual, (according to the declaration of our Saviour, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him: God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth,") so, when assembled together, none are true worshippers but they who are gathered in the Name (or John iv, 23, 24 power) of Christ. Such look to Him, and wait neither upon earthly priest, nor minister; Jesus Christ Himself being their High Priest and Matt. xviii, 20 Teacher. And whether their meetings be held in outward silence or otherwise, He will refresh and invigorate them, helping their infirmities, or enabling them to engage in preaching the word, in prayer, praise, or thanksgiving, *according to His own will*; afresh qualifying for the work, Heb. viii, 1, 2

and opening the hearts of the hearers to receive His message through His servants.

VIII. That Christians, in arranging their "services," and preparing their discourses beforehand, shew a want of faith in the care and direction of Christ. They appear not to realize the truth that Christ is the Master of assemblies, who, having conferred gifts upon His people according to His will, prompts to their orderly exercise. They fear lest their meetings should be held altogether in silence, which is erroneously viewed by some as "time lost." So, instead of waiting upon Him, in reverent prostration of soul, to know His will, they usually preach or pray or sing, according to their own previous arrangement, irrespective of any certain knowledge that the Holy Head of the Church requires such service at their hands.

Ephesians iv,
8, 11, 12.
Corinthians
xiv, 26, 33.

IX. That *congregational* singing is not handed down to us as being the practice of the apostolic churches. Psalms being chanted in the Jewish worship or at Jewish festivals, is no authority for their use in Christian worship.* For congre-

* Our Lord, indeed, and His disciples chanted a Psalm of David, viz., part of the Hallel,—a Jewish custom at the Passover. We know of no instance of it after He rose from the dead. It appears that congregational singing was unknown among Protestant dissenters in this country until A.D. 1698, when it was first adopted by the Independents.

gational singing is usually regarded as an act of worship ; and as the New Testament places all acts of worship in the public assemblies of the people on the one ground, that persons, one by one, may exercise any of the *gifts of the Spirit*, according as they may be “moved of the Holy Ghost” to do so, and not otherwise,—it is therefore not according to New Testament order, to sing with conjoined voices, unless “moved by the Holy Ghost” so to do.

I Corinthians
xiv, 26.

X. That rites and ceremonies, and the observance of “holy” days and times are inconsistent with the Kingdom of God : as is evident by the admonition of the Apostle to the Galatians, “But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage ? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.”

Galatians iv,
9, 10, 11.

XI. That the true Communion of the body and blood of Christ, is the communion of the regenerated soul with its God and Saviour ; (not any outward “ordinance,” nor necessarily connected with the observance of any outward rite.) We thus experience the fulfilment of the promise

John vi, 53, 54



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